



Bridge Cardplay: An Easy Guide

ESTABLISHING LONG SUITS

David Bird & Marc Smith

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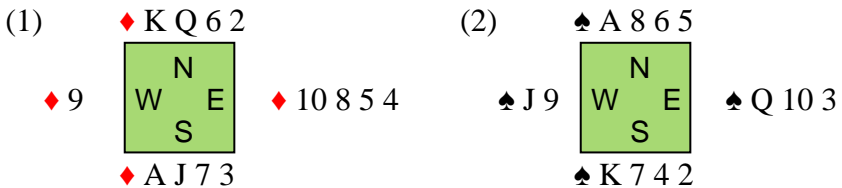
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1. Establishing a suit at no-trumps

Let's start by looking at two possible suit combinations that you might hold when playing a no-trump contract. (As always, declarer will be South and the dummy North; East and West are the defenders.)

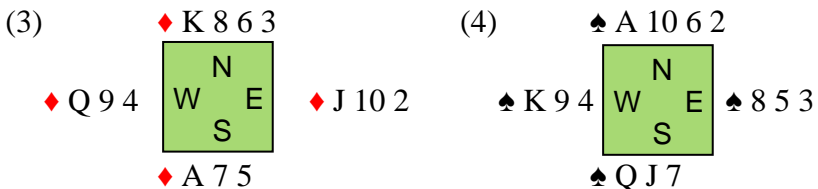


In position (1) you have four diamond tricks ready to take. There is no work for you to do. In position (2) you have only two spade tricks immediately available. To give yourself a chance of making three spade tricks, you will have to 'establish the suit'.

What does that mean? In no-trumps, it usually means that you will have to give up a trick (sometimes more than one) to the defenders. Here you will let East make one spade trick. The defenders will then have no spades left, and you will make a third trick on the fourth round.

What was the chance of making a third trick from the spade position shown? You needed the East/West spades to break 3-2. If one of the defenders had started with ♠QJ103, only two spade tricks would be possible.

Suppose you hold only seven cards in the suit you wish to establish:

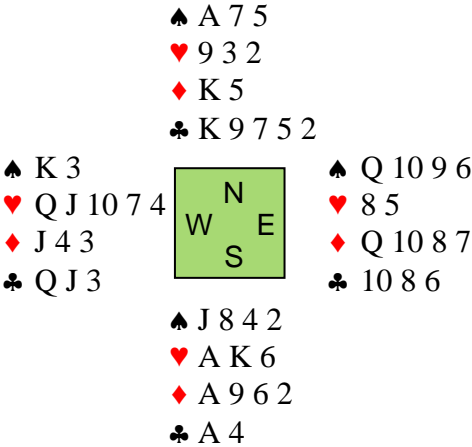


In position (3), you can set up an extra diamond trick by giving the defenders one trick. Because the suit divides 3-3, dummy's last card will become good.

In (4), you have the chance to finesse in the suit. You lead the ♠Q from your hand, planning to play low from dummy if West does not play the ♠K. Two pieces of luck await you. Firstly, West holds the missing king, so you can finesse twice against him. Secondly, the suit breaks 3-3. Even though two of your honors will be consumed on the trick where West decides to cover with the king, the thirteenth spade in dummy will become good.

As you see, you do not always have to lose a trick to set up a suit at no-trumps. An even break, or a successful finesse, may give you all the tricks that were possible.

Let's see a typical contract where you need to establish a suit.



West	North	East	South
pass	3NT	all pass	1NT

West leads the ♥Q and you pause to plan the play. You have seven top tricks: one spade, two hearts, two diamonds and two clubs. You therefore need to establish two more tricks.

Neither hearts nor diamonds offer any prospect of extra tricks. You might set up one extra trick from the spades, but this would not be enough for the contract. That leaves the club suit. If the defenders' cards

Quiz Hands

1.

♠ K 6 3
♥ 6 5 2
♦ A Q 9 4 2
♣ K 6

♠2 led



♠ A 8 4
♥ A K 8 3
♦ 6 5
♣ A 8 5 3

You arrive in 3NT, and West leads the ♠2. How many top tricks do you have? What is your plan?

2.

♠ Q 6
♥ J 6
♦ A 7 5 2
♣ A J 6 5 3

♠5 led



♠ A 2
♥ A 10 8 7
♦ K 9 4 3
♣ Q 8 2

West leads the ♠5 against 3NT. You try the ♠Q from dummy and are disappointed to see the ♠K appear from East. How will you continue the play?

Answer to Quiz Hand 1

	♠ K 6 3		
	♥ 6 5 2		
	♦ A Q 9 4 2		
	♣ K 6		
♠ Q 10 7 2	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> N W E S </div>	♠ J 9 5	
♥ J 7		♥ Q 10 9 4	
♦ J 10 7 3		♦ K 8	
♣ J 9 4		♣ Q 10 7 2	
	♠ A 8 4		
	♥ A K 8 3		
	♦ 6 5		
	♣ A 8 5 3		

West	North	East	South
pass	3NT	all pass	1NT

West leads the ♠2. How will you play the contract?

You have seven top tricks and will need two more to give you the game. The diamond suit is the most promising source on view. You need only three diamond tricks and can afford to lose two diamonds and two spades.

You win East's ♠J with the ♠A and must decide how to play the diamonds. There is no hurry to finesse the ♦Q, and you should start with a diamond to the nine. This gives you an extra chance that West will hold the ♦J10. Luck is with you, as it happens, and the ♦9 forces East's king. (If instead West chose to put in the jack or ten, covered by the queen and East's king, you would finesse the nine on the next round.)

You win the ♠9 return with dummy's ♠K and play the ace and queen of diamonds. The suit fails to break 3-3, but you then lead a fourth round of the suit. West wins and cashes two spade tricks, but you can then claim the remainder. You will end with three diamond tricks and two tricks from each of the other suits.

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DAVID BIRD (Southampton, UK) is the world's most prolific bridge writer, with over 150 bridge books to his name. Known for the clarity of his writing and explanations, he has won the American Bridge Teachers' Association Book of the Year Award a record nine times. His celebrated humorous fiction series, featuring the cantankerous Abbot, has run for over 45 years.



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